

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13 AF-10 NEA-11

EB-08 AID-05 OIC-02 /140 W

-----019943 010103Z /63

R 310800Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 352

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2382

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, ASEAN, CH, VN, UR

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE VIEWS OF GREAT POWER RELATIONS IN ASIA, AND  
CHINA-VIETNAM DISPUTE

1. SUMMARY: GOS BELIEVES CURRENT DISARRAY OF  
COMMUNIST POWERS IN ASIA AN OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S.  
TO CONSOLIDATE ITS POSITION IN AREA. IMPORTANT  
THAT PLANNED U.S.- ASEAN MINISTERIAL TALKS HAVE  
CONCRETE RESULTS. GOS CONCERNED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS  
OF CHINA-VIETNAM DISPUTE, AND ABOUT LONG-TERM  
THREAT OF COMMUNIST POWERS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AMBASSADOR'S MAY 29 FAREWELL CALL, FOREIGN MINISTER  
RAJARATNAM DESCRIBED THE MONDALE VISIT AS USEFUL IN  
SHOWING THAT THE U.S. INTEREST IN THIS PART OF THE  
WORLD IS CONTINUING. RAJA ADDED THAT IT IS OBVIOUS  
NEVERTHELESS THAT U.S. PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED  
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ELSEWHERE, PARTICULARLY TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE  
HORN OF AFRICA. (THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT SALT WAS  
ALSO A PRESENT PRIORITY.)

3. RAJA NOTED THAT WITH THE USSR, SRV, KAMPUCHEA,  
AND CHINA ALL AT EACH OTHERS THROAT, IT IS A GOOD  
TIME FOR THE U.S. TO CONSOLIDATE AND BUILD ON ITS

RELATIONSHIPS IN ASIA. IN PARTICULAR IT IS IMPORTANT THAT U.S. ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH ASEAN BE CONSOLIDATED. LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FORTHCOMING MINISTERIAL MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON, RAJA SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE MEETINGS ARE NOT JUST TALK, BUT THAT THE U.S. HAVE FIRM PROPOSALS FOR AID TO ASEAN. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT THERE IS AMPLE TIME FOR ASEAN LEADERS TO CONSULT AMONG THEMSELVES AND WORK OUT THEIR PROPOSALS PRIOR TO THE WASHINGTON MEETING. RAJA EMPHASIZED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE CONCRETE, TANGIBLE RESULTS FROM THE U.S.-ASEAN TALKS, EVEN IF MAGNITUDE IS NOT PARTICULARLY LARGE. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH THAI FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT AND INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOCHTAR (BOTH OF WHOM HAVE RECENTLY VISITED SINGAPORE), AND THAT BOTH AGREE WITH THIS VIEW. (MFA SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE RAHIM ISHAK, IN A SEPARATE CALL, SAID THAT RAJA HAD SENT A MEMO ALONG THESE LINES TO HIS ASEAN COUNTERPARTS.)

4. ASEAN'S MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS, SAID RAJARATNAM, ARE WITH THE U.S., JAPAN, AND WESTERN EUROPE. ASEAN MUST BE REALISTIC, HE ADDED, AND RECOGNIZE THAT "WE ARE ON THAT SIDE OF THE FENCE." IT IS NOT A MATTER OF BEING "PRO-AMERICAN," HE NOTED, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT THAT OUR INTERESTS OVERLAP TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT, AND IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT TO IMPROVE ASEAN RELATIONS WITH THESE DEVELOPED, WESTERN COUNTRIES.

5. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN A PEEP FROM THE USSR ON SINGAPOREAN ASSISTANCE TO P-3 INDIAN OCEAN FLIGHTS (WHICH WERE REPORTED IN THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, MAY 19, 1978), RAJA CONFIRMED THAT THERE INDEED HAD BEEN NO SOVIET PROTEST. HE ADDED THAT HAD THERE BEEN SUCH A PROTEST, THE GOS WOULD HAVE RESPONDED BY POINTING TO SOVIET ACCESS TO CAM RANH BAY (INFORMATION ON SUCH

ACCESS COMING FROM NO LESS AN AUTHORITY THAN THE CHINESE).

6. REQUESTING THAT THE INFORMATION BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL, RAJARATNAM SAID THAT THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TO ASEAN IS CHANGING. KAPITSA, HEAD OF THE FAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT OF THE SOVIET MFA, TOLD SINGAPORE AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW CONCEICAO

THAT THE USSR THINKS ASEAN IS A GOOD THING.  
HOWEVER, THE USSR MUST BEAR IN MIND ITS RELATIONS  
WITH VIETNAM. THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH THE USSR HAS NOT  
OPENLY SUPPORTED ASEAN, IT DOES NOT OPPOSE IT.  
RAJARATNAM ADDED THAT HIS ANALYSIS IS THAT AS  
ASEAN CONTINUES TO DEVELOP THE SOVIETS DO NOT WANT  
TO FIND THEMSELVES LEFT ON THE OUTSIDE, PARTICULARLY  
AS THE CHINESE ARE ALREADY SUPPORTIVE OF ASEAN.

7. RAJARATNAM MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOS HAS  
APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THE USSR, PRC, AND SRV IN THE  
LONG TERM, BUT MUST NEVERTHELESS DEAL WITH THESE  
COUNTRIES. SINGAPORE IS QUITE PREPARED TO TRADE  
WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ALSO (SUCH AS  
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CZECHOSLOVAKIA), ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THE EXTENT  
OF TRADE WILL EVER BE COMPARABLE TO THAT WITH  
WESTERN EUROPE, JAPAN, AND THE U.S.

8. IN SEPARATE MAY 29 MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, SENIOR  
MFA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING SENIOR MINISTERS OF STATE LEE KHOON  
CHOY AND RAHIM ISHAK, AND PERMANENT SECRETARY CHIA CHEONG FOOK,  
EXPRESSED CONCERN TO THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE CONFRONTATION  
BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM. IF CHINA IS ASSERTING  
PROTECTION OVER OVERSEAS CHINESE IN VIETNAM TO THIS  
EXTENT, THEY SAY, WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY ABOUT THE  
CHINESE ATTITUDE TOWARD OVERSEAS CHINESE ELSEWHERE?  
(THE CONFRONTATION HAS RECEIVED HEAVY NEWS COVERAGE  
IN THE ENGLISH, MALAY, CHINESE AND TAMIL LANGUAGE  
PRESS. A STRAITS TIMES EDITORIAL ON MAY 26  
COMMENTS THAT THE DISPUTE IS NOT BASED ON IDEOLOGY,  
BUT ON "MALTREATMENT OF KINSHIP RELATIONS." THE  
EDITORIAL, IN A COMMENT WHICH SEEMS TO REFLECT  
OFFICIAL OPINION, CONCLUDES "THIS ATTITUDE OF PEKING  
TOWARD ITS OVERSEAS CHINESE HAS SERIOUS RAMIFICATIONS  
FOR COUNTRIES WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF CHINESE WANTING  
TO ESTABLISH OR NORMALIZE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH  
CHINA.")

9. IN REPOSE TO THESE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN,  
THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT HE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT  
THE CHINESE WOULD LET THE CONFRONTATION DEVELOP  
INTO A CONFLICT, ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE MAY FEEL  
OBLIGED TO ACT IN THE INTEREST OF THE OVERSEAS  
CHINESE. THE SOVIETS, IN TEN, MAY USE INCIDENTS  
SUCH AS THAT ON THE USSURI RIVER, TO REMIND THE  
CHINESE OF THEIR PRESENCE ON THE NORTHERN BORDER.  
HOWEVER, IT IS IN THE INTERESTS OF NONE OF THOSE  
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INVOLVED TO PERMIT THE SITUATION TO GET OUT OF HAND.  
HOLDRIDGE

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## Message Attributes

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